

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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“THE GODFATHER DOCTRINE”

Security Force Assistance (SFA) Training – An Offer the Marine Corps Can’t Refuse

by

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Biography

LtCol Douglas G. “Lucky” Luccio, USMC is a student at the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He is an artillery officer with six deployments, to include combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan as a Security Force Assistance Advising Team (SFA AT) leader / senior advisor. He advised an Iraqi National Police (INP) Port of Entry Director near the Iraq / Syria Border and Afghan National Army (ANA) Brigade Commander in South Helmand Province. He learned basic Arabic and Dari languages in preparation for his advisor tours.



Abstract

Thesis: In a period of resource austerity and complex strategic environment, the USMC's training, preparation and deployment of Security Force Assistance (SFA) is a small investment that gives the United States vital placement, access, and cultural context to developing countries. USMC SFA success has history from the Philippines through Banana Wars, WWII, Vietnam, and most recently Iraq and Afghanistan. The current de-emphasis of SFA training and deployments is an economy of force decision as budgets and manpower are becoming more restrictive. Consequently, the USMC has created a void of experienced advisors and trainers. Investing in a permanent SFA role prevents future wars as much as it helps win current ones.

SFA advising has a 120-year history of enhancing counterinsurgency (COIN) and conventional operations. It is a capability and a perspective. To articulate the perspective, I will introduce explain and apply the Godfather Doctrine to lessons the Marine Corps seems to forget after each major conflict. The direct approach of conventional forces often overlooks SFA's indirect capability. Advising facilitates the transition of local governance, which expedites the completion of a conflict and plants seeds of partnership for the future.

A successful advisor program promotes stability and interoperability with the security forces they train. The investment is small, and the results are tangible. How different would Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq have turned out if more attention was spent on the indigenous history, language, and culture? Military advisors would argue US interests aligned with the population's sentiment equals progress for both.

Introduction

Fourteen years into the *Long-War* the Marine Corps risks forgetting lessons learned and relearned in blood. The Marine Corps needs to archive or institutionalize military advisor training before the knowledge base disappears. Upon looking to the past for answers, a repetitive cycle appeared. Initial advisors into a conflict relied on impromptu training to ready themselves, where those who deployed in a mature campaign were more thoroughly prepared. To gauge advisor training efficiency, seventeen military advisors from Vietnam to Afghanistan Wars were interviewed. Interviews focused on training: What was effective? What was not? Advisor insights from 1965 reflect similar concerns to those deploying in 2016. In 40-50 years will Marine Corps military advisor programs reflect lessons learned codified in doctrine or again start from scratch? Currently, there isn't an advisor training doctrine. However, there are Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Marine Corps Administrative reports (MARADMINs), Marine Corps Orders, course curriculums, journals, books, and articles that can provide definitions and explanations for SFA. Doctrine, to the magnitude of the *Small Wars Manual* for COIN does not exist for SFA. *The Godfather Doctrine for military advisors*, formalization of advisor training and advisor selection is proposed as a starting point to build SFA doctrine. History, similarities, cost, cultural change, and recommendations articulate where the Marine Corps has been and where it ought to focus in the future should be captured, recorded and documented.

Both effective and ineffective training are fresh in the minds of Iraq and Afghan advisor veterans.¹ Vietnam veterans also recall, quite vividly, what prepared them to be effective advisors and what training could have improved. World War II veterans' ranks are diminishing quickly and within 10-15 years, the opportunity to engage them directly will be

lost. The Marine Corps needs to reach out to the Korean and Vietnam advisors before their experience is lost to time. Some things are constant and should be archived and codified as insights through military advisor doctrine.

After the initial 2003 success of US forces in Iraq, policy makers realized that Special Operations Forces, specifically US Army Special Forces (SF), were in higher demand than were available. There was a need to train Iraqi Army, Police, Border Guards, and Port Authorities. The solution was to train conventional forces to serve as advisors, freeing up SF to maintain its capacity in unconventional warfare (UW). In 2006 the Marine Corps established a Special Operations Force (SOF), U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC).² As SOF capabilities expanded, both the Army and the Marine Corps trained Iraqis Security Forces (ISF). While both services faced similar challenges, the depth of this discussion specifically reflects Marine Corps equities.

After completing advisor training with three separate teams I shared and compared observations with other advisors, trainers, Division and Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) staffs. I learned my observations are not unique. Many advisors, trainers and G-3/G-7 Staffs had similar insight. When I MEF hosted the first annual Tri-MEF cross-leveling Conference 13-14 April 2015, advisor training trends were presented to LtGen Berger (I MEF), LtGen Whistler (III MEF) and MajGen Beydler (II MEF). Their Expeditionary Operations training Group (EOTG) directors, who ensure advisor training, concurred that stabilizing advisor-training throughput was Marine Corps wide issue. I discussed ideas that this paper highlights. There is an enthusiasm and realization that SFA training needs a permanent home. The Marine Corps is a learning organization and improves every year it provides advisor training. In 2007, Richard Cavagnol pointed out that fifty years ago, the Marine

Corps had a “lack of coherent and integrated strategy for training, deploying, and supporting” military advisors.³ I interviewed Fifteen Vietnam-era advisors and inquired about advisor-training concerns. Specifically, I asked “what training was effective?” and “what training do you wish you had received?”⁴ My conclusion: nascent conflicts start with rudimentary advisor training. The bibliography reflects the breadth of research that has inspired trends and recommendations. Notes reflect specific attributable thoughts and comments. Otherwise, the findings are a mix of observation, interviews and extensive reading. Organizationally the Marine Corps responds and re-learns how to train advisors after each major conflict. The next conflict should train advisors quicker, with the wisdom of the past based on doctrine, not forgotten ideas. Iraq and Afghanistan advisor-training similar to Vietnam started slow, re-discovered history of previous advisors, and eventually produced veterans and developed effective training. Why re-learn if you could start at a proven level of performance?

According to my observations, initial advisors focused on hard skills (weapons, radios and first aid). Soft skills (negotiation, language and culture) didn’t receive as much attention. Language consisted of parroting a few key memorized phrases. Advisor Team Leaders were allotted “white space” to fill in with what they thought was important. Since this effort was a new venture, instructors and advisors didn’t know what was important. Without a doctrine or realization that proven concepts existed, the neophyte ATCs provided their best effort. Feedback from deployed advisors shaped the focus of following teams. Eventually advisor instruction had expanded to include Afghanistan bound teams. Their instruction included; Lane training for counter-IED, convoy operations, advanced first aid, small arms, crew served and foreign weapons training, and greater language and culture

experiences. A formalized process developed at home station ATC (primarily staffed by 1stMarDIV and 2ndMarDiv) led to a Training and Education Command (TECOM) validated Block IV capstone exercise at Advisor Training Group (ATG) in Twenty-Nine Palms, CA. The formal nature and articulated standards evolved quickly and improved every year.

After ten years of learning and improving SFA advisor preparation, the Marine Corps closed ATG. Experienced advisors returned to their parent unit and institutional expertise was lost. In August 2014, a requirement to send advisors to Iraq emerged. Although the training architecture was dismantled, I MEF and II MEF did their best to provide advisor training. I was a recently deployed advisor, now working in I MEF G-3 and provided voice to emerging challenges. My counterparts in II MEF reported similar frustrations and challenges. The 2014 Iraq advisor teams (I MEF and II MEF) leaned heavily on residual advisor training experience resident in MEF G-7's Expeditionary Operations Training Groups (EOTG). Teams following them would have a skeleton crew of experienced advisors. Once the limited experience transfers, advisors will again "start from scratch" just as the beginning of the Iraq and Vietnam efforts did. This cycle can stop. Policy makers must consider a permanent advisor structure, established on pre-existing expertise and training facilities. Advisor know-how will be costly to recreate later.

The cost of advisor teams training includes time to develop training expertise. Adding advisor training does not happen over-night. The investment starts with selecting the right people to teach as well as serve as advisors. Selection includes Marines who have demonstrated the capacity to train, mentor and advise others from different cultures under stressful conditions. While selecting the right person may be a challenging metric to achieve, a useful analogy illustrates the perils of improper military advisor selection. *The Godfather*

Doctrine, inspired by the *Godfather* movie trilogy is proposed as a solution to codify Marine Corps advisor training. In the dramatic movies, Vito Corleone was a mafia boss who had three sons: Sonny, Fredo, and Michael. Aptitude, preparation and personality differed, as did their contributions to the family business. The movie offers correlations to the Marine Corps military advisor sourcing.

The eldest son was Sonny. He was aggressive, street-smart and focused on violence. He lacked patience and an understanding of external environmental considerations. He thought tactically, not strategically. He was a good fighter, but created new enemies. The middle son, Fredo, was timid, unable to keep emotions and personal feelings private and not well trained. He had responsibility above his skill level. He undermined the family business due to his position to skill mismatch. The youngest, Michael, had exceptional military combat experience. He took time to learn the business, created new allies and demonstrated patience. Always in control, he took decisive action when it provided the biggest advantage. He consolidated and eliminated enemies.

Sonny was a man of action who never learned to see things through the eyes of those he advised. Fredo was the “spare” individual augment whose parent unit had to give up someone (least impact to parent unit). Michael was the ideal advisor – proven experience and a strong desire to learn a new skill. He was patient, calculating, and leveraged force with diplomacy. Military advising crosses cultural, language, and training barriers. Advising is conducted independently in austere, dangerous environments. Advisors are often surrounded by treachery and conflicting values. An individual who is too quick, (Sonny), or too slow, (Fredo), to make a decision will fail as an advisor. The Marine Corps must identify and assign the culturally astute and patient (Michael) to the advisor mission.

The History of Marine advising is older than amphibious doctrine

The Marine Corps was a small wars force long before it became a proponent of amphibious doctrine (1930s) and a successful large-scale land force (1950s). The Marine Corps is justifiably proud of its amphibious contributions to WWII and the Korean War. While landing on opposed beaches was innovative and effective, the Marine Corps first made a reputation as trainers, advisors and as a force to quell resistance to US interests. Counter insurgency (COIN) and military advising gave Marine Corps legend to names like Chesty Puller, Dan Dailey and John Ripley.

Understanding what enabled the Marine Corps to ensure military effectiveness of nascent or re-emerging governments is applicable to future conflicts. The Marine Corps effectively advised in the Philippines, Caribbean, and Central America (Banana Wars), laying the ground-work for Special Operations during WWII. *The Small Wars Manual* articulated the lessons learned in what many consider the precursor to counter-insurgency doctrine. US involvement in Vietnam started as a military advisor effort, yet unlike COIN and the *Small Wars Manual*, advising doesn't have a Marine Corps Doctrine.

First published in 1940, the *Small Wars Manual* found resurgence 60 years later when Marines began training for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁵ The *Small Wars Manual* provides tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) in the following areas: logistics, initial operations, infantry patrols, mounted detachments (to include tactical load for a mule, convoys, river crossings, disarmament of population, armed native organizations, military government, and elections).⁶ *The Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*

(FM-3-24) was published in 2006.⁷ It's authors relied upon the *Small Wars Manual*, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964), Mao Zedong's *On Guerilla Warfare* (1965) and other counterinsurgency texts written in the last century.⁸ While the Marine Corps developed *Small Wars* and COIN doctrine, training and employing military advisors have several interpretations. The Marine Corps needs to determine the role of the military advisor. Failure to codify this role would risk sending out a generation of Fredos and Sonny's, according to *the Godfather Doctrine*. History shows what training, priorities and doctrine should be. Now is the time to ensure we have Michaels to establish the training and grooming the next generation of advisors.

Lessons learned in the Banana Wars and WWII were relearned in Vietnam. Marine Corps doctrine was well suited for conventional warfare while slow to adapt to counterinsurgency and advising.⁹ The Covan Association (Vietnamese word for "friend") offered many resources and experts to discuss training and challenges associated with military advising. This Association includes Gen Boomer (Ret), LtGen VanRiper (Ret), BGen Draude (Ret), Col Carter (Ret), Col Warren (Ret) and a dozen other advisors who have recommended sources and confirmed research. Their input validated the assumption that military advising is cyclical. Initial advisors of a new conflict improvise training and those in a mature environment arrive at training priorities that have been effective in previous conflicts. From their input, I captured trends on advisor selection and training in this paper to include: Proven combat leadership experience; First-aid, language, culture, and enemy weapons familiarization;¹⁰ Expertise plus team role; Combat Advising Platoon (CAP); Combat tour length of advisors: 1 year; and Military Assistance Training Advisor (MATA).

Proven combat leadership experience. In the Godfather Doctrine, proven combat leadership is preeminent; Sonny and Michael were tested and proven before they operated independently of Don Corleone. A lieutenant with no concept of combat should not make his debut as a combat advisor. He should deploy first, and if successful under fire, could become an advisor. Credibility is everything. Vietnam advisors understood the importance of leveraging credibility while frequently advising senior Vietnamese officers; war experience was the credential that mattered most.

First-aid, language, culture, and enemy weapons. The core skills that made Vietnam military advisors successful were priorities during training. Unfortunately, language and cultural training were not standardized, some advisors deployed without first learning to speak Vietnamese. They were at a disadvantage immediately, like Fredo establishing family casino interests in Las Vegas (a field he knew nothing about). Those who received language training were far more confident and competent. Reviewing the experience of Korean War advisors shows the importance of language in culture. Korea Military Advisory Group (KMAG) recognized the challenge as “communication between a highly skilled and competent group of technicians on one hand and an eager and willing, yet often uneducated and untrained people on the other.”¹¹ The Marine Corps utilized an 11-week Vietnamese language-training program at Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, CA,¹² however, not all advisors attended formalized language training. Many only received rudimentary training in language survival skills before deployment. It was not uncommon for last-minute assignments to force an advisor to bypass language training and head straight to Vietnam.

Expertise plus team role. Everyone on the team must be an expert at something. Everyone was also cross-trained. In the event the expert was unavailable, an alternate must accomplish the mission. Along with individual and team experts, a command relationship (modeled after KMAC from Korea) was developed for Vietnam. The Marine Advisor Unit (MAU) reported to the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MAC-V).¹³ This command relationship was built around the advisors. Conventional units had a separate chain of command. The advisors brought order out of confusion by articulating the context of South Vietnamese military leadership.¹⁴

Combat Advising Platoon (CAP.) A platoon imbedded within a single village protects the people while ensuring their development and friendliness towards US efforts. The villages that had CAPs were effectively influenced to support South Vietnam. Viet Cong were gradually pushed back from these areas. This technique was additionally successful as Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan from 2009-current.¹⁵

Combat tour length of advisors: 1 year. By the time an advisor builds credibility and rapport, his tour ends and a new advisor replaces him. This lack of time together leads to a degradation in continuity of progress. One year is a difficult assignment, but leads to more effective advising effort.¹⁶

Military Assistance Training Advisor (MATA). Marine Advisors trained at Ft Bragg, NC, learned from US Army Special Forces. The “Military Assistance Training Advisor” (MATA) course of instruction, was tailored for Vietnam. The sentiment among Marine Advisors was that this course contained some of the best training they had prior to deployment. A review of the course curriculum showed a methodical examination of culture, geography, government, weapons, tactics and navigation.¹⁷ The most important attribute of

their training was that the instructors had previous combat advising experience in Korea or Indochina.¹⁸

Many things are different, but many are the same

Many lessons learned by Vietnam advisors have been re-learned in recent conflicts.¹⁹ While these best practices were not widely known, the skills quickly became apparent and were incorporated into training and readiness. History shows us, a similar conclusion was reached during previous advising efforts. The relearned or rediscovered best practices include experience, hard and soft skills, selection of advisors, and a balance of combat mindset and diplomatic ability. Combat advising is not the same as conventional fighting. Regional experience is also critical. Military advisors need both hard skills and soft skills. Recent advisors have added a few tools. Picking the right talent for tours as advisors remains a consistent area for improvement. While it's necessary to select experienced combat veterans, it's equally important to ensure the selectee has patience, creativity, and an understanding of the views of the people he is training. Combat mindset while serving as a military diplomat is another way of articulating a balance of negotiation skills with a sense of force-protection. "Green on blue" (where the military trainees assaulted their trainers or supporting military) attacks from 2010 to 2013 highlighted the balance of cultural awareness and making oneself hard to kill.²⁰

The Godfather carefully considered the right guy for the job. When Don Corleone's Godson, Johnny Fontaine, was having difficulties in Hollywood, the Don dispatched his most trusted advisor, Tom Hagen to smooth things over. Tom carried the authority and the commander's intent. Tom is the equivalent of a staff officer. Division and MEF Staffs need

a few Toms to provide articulate advisor training requirements and ensure integration into operational objectives. Picking the right Marine for the job is important, as is building a team. SFA Advisor Teams (SFA ATs) are especially effective when built around a core of individuals who already know each other.²¹ Before assembling a team from the same battalion or regiment, SFAAT requests are initiated by MARFOR Commanders. Requests are vetted, scrutinized and reviewed by Marine Forces Command (MARFORCOM). Manning documents identifying rank and Military Occupational Skill (MOS), presented by line number, grouped by team, with report date for training are assigned to operational units to execute their Title 10 Responsibilities (Train, Man and Equip).

Insight from WWII Marine 2nd Raider Battalion holds true in that “initiative, resourcefulness, control of small groups ...specific orders few, but strictly enforced...and advisors should be encouraged to think for themselves.”²² Afghanistan’s COMISAF Security Force Assistance Guide proposed the following characteristics enhance an advisor’s ability to adapt and thrive in a foreign culture: Rank, age and technical expertise; empathy, flexibility, and perceptiveness; open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity; self-reliance; tolerance for difference, ability to accept and learn from failure, and a sense of humor; ability to work in transactional environment; and patience to include knowing when it is right to step away.²³ This offers insight to what makes an individual successful as an advisor. Traditionally, Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) task subordinate billets to their Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) to fill. The vetting process requires an O-5 level battalion or squadron commander to validate an individual’s fitness for service as an advisor. My experience training military advisors suggests that the commander’s exposure to military advising has a direct affect on who is nominated to advise. Commanders who had been advisors or worked

with advisors had a better appreciation of the skills needed. One criticism is that the best candidates aren't always selected, rather those who the command can do without (Fredo). It's a non-standard assignment that takes individuals away from their primary responsibilities. Fortunately, the Commandant of the Marine Corps has included language in promotion and command board precepts to reward those who have been advisors.

To apply the Godfather Doctrine, the preferred choice for assignment to an advisor team is Michael. He has the right mix of skills, yet the default is to send either Sonny or Fredo. Fredo needs to learn the family business before operating independently. He needs to learn his MOS before he works on his own. Sonny is a killing machine. He does one thing well – he eliminates problems. At least the choke chain can be pulled and his focus directed. Sonny can serve on a team, ideally as the convoy leader or weapons expert, but the team leader needs to be a Michael. Culturally savvy, patient, bi-lingual, and reserved, Michael drives the team. Fredo is too much of a liability and Sonny should only be used for specific missions.

In order to put the right person to the right job, there needs to be a panel, consisting of commanders and former military advisors to ensure only the “right guy” is sent to be an advisor. The “right guy” should be: a creative thinker, a hustler, well-read and an intellectually curious risk-taker who looks at organizational success over personal interests.²⁴ Advisors thrive in the gray area. Iraq advisor Seth Folsom, who authored *In the Gray Area: A Marine Advisor Team at War* argued the difficulty of being an advisor is meeting American objectives while addressing the culture of “what’s in it for me?” of those he advised.²⁵ One such advisor that thrived in this gray area was LtCol Bob “Ogre” McCarthy who was assigned as a Police Transition Team (PTT) in Habbiniyah, Iraq. He was stern,

demanding, and culturally astute. His Arabic skills allowed direct engagement with the Iraqi Police, and his understanding of Arabic culture facilitated leveraging decision makers. When an Iraqi Police Officer arrived at Camp Coolie, holding his bleeding and unconscious daughter, “Ogre” knew exactly what to do. McCarthy took the girl to the field hospital and explained her kinship (granddaughter) to a powerful Sheik. The field hospital made an exception to treating the Iraqi Civilian and her recovery boosted Ogre’s influence with the Iraqis. Under the Godfather Doctrine, LtCol McCarthy is a “Michael.” He is strong, patient and culturally astute.²⁶

An advisor board ensures a balance of commander’s observations of their troops, and discerning eye of former advisors who know what the job entails. Commanders understand the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and can appreciate developmental needs of Marines in their charge. Experienced advisors can naturally weed out Fredos, minimize Sonnys, and ensure as many Michaels as possible. The balance between commanders and former advisors selecting future advisors is worthy of additional consideration.

The cost of war versus the cost of preventing wars

Iraq’s current security challenges reflect the resolve of military advisors, from Iran. Iran advisors had different objectives for Iraqi government than those espoused by the US led coalition. There is a historical comparison: The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) was trained by the Chinese Military Assistance Group (CMAG)²⁷ mirroring efforts of the American Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG).²⁸ More recently, Iran has sent over 1,000 military advisors to train Shiite and Kurdish fighters against ISIS.²⁹ Iran’s advisor effort allows them to shape their narrative. China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom have all

used military advisors to train foreign military forces. Significant opportunity to invest in advising is available.

Military advisors require training that is unique from conventional military training. I MEF and II MEF have benefitted from a DOD Grant for critical language acquisition. Specifically, San Diego State University (SDSU) and Coastal Carolina Community College (CCCC) provide professional instruction in Arabic, Dari and Pashto for deploying military advisors. The focus of these programs is conversation, validated by performance on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). OPI success determines conversational competence. Professional linguists and cryptologists are evaluated through the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB), which determines reading and comprehension competence. The testing difference is an important distinction. Advisors need to converse and training should focus on conversation, not reading comprehension.³⁰ As long as the program is endorsed, entire advisor teams or designated advisors on each team are immersed in 5-7 weeks of language training.³¹

The Joint Improved Explosives Device – Defeat Organization (JIED-DO) sponsors intensive “lane-training” for conventional forces, including military advisors. The training is regionally tailored, teaching individuals and teams how to identify, avoid and mitigate IEDs. Since military advisors are often outside the wire, their understanding of these TTPs is critical to their success. Similar to the language grant, this is a program that is funded by DOD and greatly improves the survivability of advisors.

Advisor Training Cell (ATC) funding varies by MEF to include focus on advanced medical training (Live Tissue), pre-deployment site survey, foreign weapons training, negotiation, and tailored individual/team training. The cost per team ranges from \$500-

900K.³² Advisor Training Group (ATG) expenses are close to \$2 million per team and 60% of that budget is the international role players.³³ In order to provide a realistic training validation, native speaking role players are assigned “acting roles” as local chief of police, mayor, mullah or military leadership. The advisor teams interact and apply their learning in an environment that reflects the local culture, language, custom and TTPs experienced in projected deployment environment. After factoring DOD sponsored funding, the Marine Corps is responsible for the cost of approximately \$3 million per team.

Changing a culture: ensuring relevance for military advisors

Combat military advising frequently is treated as a temporary solution as part of a larger problem. In order to prevent the cyclical process of learning, forgetting and relearning the effective ways to prepare military advisors, there must be a greater sense of permanence. The improvements include the creation of a Supplemental Military Occupation Skill (MOS), Commandant Marine Corps directed language in command and promotion board precepts giving credit for advisor experience, the creation of Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG) and reinvestment of experienced advisors.

First, the Marine Corps established a “Foreign Security Force (FSF) Advisor free Military Occupation Skill (MOS)” on 23 Sept 2014,³⁴ which allows the tracking of military advisors. A “free” MOS is a critical skill additional duty. Proven advisors can be assigned to training or policy billets where advisor advocacy is desired. Additionally, they serve as advisors as additional requirements arise.

Second, promotion boards are governed by law and select “the best and most fully qualified”³⁵ candidates. The Secretary of Navy provides guidance through precepts, which

highlight critical shortfalls for consideration for promotion boards. Command Selection boards are informed by precepts articulated by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. In both cases, there is an acknowledgement of skills demonstrated by military advisors. Assignment of advisors is balanced against critical billets such as battalion or squadron operations or executive officer. The commander's dilemma is who to deploy with the unit, and who to deploy externally (as an advisor). Board precepts ensure proven combat performance is considered analogous to critical billets within an individual's MOS.

Finally, upon successful deployment, advisors blend back into the landscape. There are opportunities to re-invest advisors. My assessment is that ATCs were ad-hoc organizations requiring temporary assignment from operating forces. Their utility and efficiency grew rapidly from 2004-2014. Lessons learned and relearned from previous conflicts climbed an initial sharp learning curve. To ensure momentum, some of our best advisors need to be tasked to ATC or ATG. Some should serve in MEF, Division, Wing and Group level G-3 or G-7 staffs. PCS opportunities could also include MCSCG or HQMC.

Recommendations

In the final film of *the Godfather Trilogy*, Don Corleone (Michael), struggles to bring legitimacy to the family business. His desire for predictability loses another round to competing priorities. Does the Marine Corps and its military advisor venture suffer a similar fate, or does it finally get the respect it deserves? In order to break from the gangster pick-up game that is played upon a new conflict, the Marine Corps needs to build an advisor network that ties together the network of relationships and know-how of those who have done it. A few recommendations explain a path to break the cycle of re-learning.

Appoint a Vito Corleone as the Godfather of Military Advising. To grow Michael Corleone-styled military advisor leaders, the Marine Corps needs to ensure the right teachers/mentors run the advisor training schools and organizations. There needs to be advisor growth opportunities through Colonel and representation as General. Blunt, candid, seasoned advisors who have thrived in the darkest and most dangerous places need a home in the Marine Corps. Vito Corleone was the original Don who trained Michael to run the family business. The Marine Corps needs a few Vito Corleones to ensure advisor training is properly maintained. The Marine Corps needs A Godfather of Military Advising. Successful advisors should be reinvested into roles that keep their experience relevant. Many have been advisors but few really understand it. Though not a primary skillset, the few that have done it well should be called upon to do it again. Colonel Kenney and Brigadier Generals Castellvi, Yoo, Langley, and Smith (George) would make a great “heads of the five families”. Operational Advisory Groups (OAGs) ensure the interests of discrete fields or warfighting functions have a venue. There’s an Air, Ground, Logistics, Artillery and ANGLICO OAG, to name a few; why not establish an SFA OAG led by a seasoned military advisor?

Get the right Consiglieri. Don Corleone leaned on Tom Hagen as his trusted advisor on to ensure the machine ran properly. “Consiglieri” is Italian for “counselor.” The caretakers of MCSCG, ATG, ATC and EOTG need to understand the mission of the advisor and provide counsel to the SFA OAG. G-3 and G-7 Staff’s also need a few Tom Hagens to look holistically at grooming advisors and keeping the Don’s plan on track.

Honor your past. The Godfather Trilogy relied on flash-backs to tell the story of where the *La Familia* (the Family) had been. Knowing history and language of those you

will advise follows the same logic. Lessons learned are the flash-backs of a Marine Corps Doctrine for military advisors. The Small Wars Manual introduced doctrine for the advising and counterinsurgency lessons of the Philippines and the Banana Wars. It's time to do the same with Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan combat military advisor efforts and publish a doctrine for advisors.

Learn to speak the language. Every time a character in the Godfather Trilogy spoke Italian, there were others that didn't understand the conversation. Emphasis on conversational speaking and a basic knowledge of alphabet, grammar and sentence construction are optimal. DOD grants for academic institutions, such as SDSU and CCCC give the Marines the tools they need. An arrangement where the schools could teach on Marine Bases and Installations would reduce the TAD costs. Make foreign language a priority in Marine Corps. Cultivate relationships with Universities that can tailor language to emerging mission sets. Create advisor opportunities at MARSOC and SOCOM. Keep resident knowledge keen while putting successful advisors where they can influence the next generation of advisors.

Move the Family to where it can do the most good. The Corleone family moved from New York to Las Vegas because the location offered a better venue to suit the organizational needs. The Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG) and Advisor Training Group (ATG) were established as dedicated Security Cooperation Organizations. Advisor training is coordinated through MCSCG and validated through Block IV training at ATG. MCSCG's mission is "execute and enable Security Cooperation (SC) programs, training, planning, and activities in order to ensure unity of effort in support of USMC and Regional Marine Component Command (MARFOR) objectives and in coordination with the operating

forces and MAGTF(s)”. In this capacity, MCSCG serves as the Marine Corp’s school-house and training center for advising efforts. MCSCG should remain as the intellectual center for military advising.³⁶ MCSCG is staffed with former advisors and ensures throughput for security cooperation advising efforts. Re-locate to twenty-nine Palms to ensure a constant role for ATG, which stood down in 2014. Ft Story, VA (current home of MCSCG) doesn’t have the training ranges and practical integration of hard and soft skills available at Twenty-Nine Palms. Moving MCSCG and increasing its scope to the ATG mission offers the merger of culture and hard skills in one location.

Summary / Conclusion

SFA advising has proven its utility in Marine Corps counterinsurgency operations for over 120 years. SFA is addressed as a new idea each time we fight a war. Training the next generation of advisors will take time to regenerate corporate knowledge. It’s time to institutionally accept and codify SFA doctrine. Don Corleone (Vito) spent a lifetime learning how to leverage others in a violent environment. He gradually prepared his three sons: Sonny, Fredo and Michael. Each prepared differently and the results are comparable to how the Marine Corps has trained military advisors. This Godfather Doctrine offers a stern warning of the difficulty of independent combat duty. Sonny has utility in force protection and Michael is well suited to train, mentor and advise. Fredo has yet to learn the family business and needs to develop core skills before he is unsupervised. Advisors, like the Corleone sons, require an established set of family rules. The Marine Corps needs to establish SFA Advisor Doctrine to ensure the success of those that follow.

Notes

¹ Hajjar, LTC Remi “*What Lessons Did We Learn (or Re-Learn) About Military Advising After 9/11?*” *MILITARY REVIEW* November-December 2014

² <https://www.marsocfoundation.org/refresh/templates/about.php?id=23> Accessed on 25 Nov 2015

³ Richard Cagnol, “Lessons from Vietnam: Essential Training of Marine Advisors and Combined Action Platoon Personnel,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, March, 2007, p17.

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¹⁵ West, Bing “the Village” (New York, NY, Pocket Books, 2003)

¹⁶ COL Jeff Kenney, USMC. II MEF Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG) Director (2014-2015). Average Block IV Training Cost (ATG, 29 Palms CA). Interview 17 Nov 2015.

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